Linking North-East with Bay of Bengal

1136. SHRI SILVIUS CONDPAN: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state from when his Ministry is going to ply cargo vessels on River Brahmaputra under Central Inland Water Transport Corporation to link the North-East with the Bay of Bengal in promoting trade and commercial activities?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): Central Inland Water Transport Corporation (CIWTC) is already operating its vessels between Kolkata and North-East (Guwahati, Karimganj, Badarpur etc.) through riverine route *via* Bangladesh, Kolkata is a riverine port on the tip of Bay of Bengal.

National Highways in Sikkim

1137. SHRI O.T. LEPCHA: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the total length of National Highways in Sikkim requiring urgent repair, maintenance and expansion indicating proposal made and sanction granted on each highway, sector-wise;

(b) whether BRO could not carry out the repair and double laning of NH-31-A; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIAPPA): (a) to (c) Sikkim is served by only one National Highway NH 31-A with total length of 92.6 km, out of which 40.5 km is in Sikkim. The entire length of this National Highway requires expansion and a proposal for its widening to 2-lane with paved shoulders has been approved by the Government for implementation. The highway is maintained under GS funding. The repairs and maintenance is carried out by Border Roads Organisation (BRO). BRO has reported that 26 locations have been identified by them for repairing at an estimated cost of Rs. 368.93 lakh and the work is to be completed by 15.3.2008. Double laning of NH-31 A has been entrusted to National Highways Authority of India, who have taken steps for preparing Detailed Project Report and Bid Document for inviting bids on BOT (Annuity) basis.

Proposals for NHs for Uttar Pradesh

†1138. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of highways in Uttar Pradesh regarding which proposal was received by Government in the years 2005-06 and 2006-07 to convert them to National Highways;

(b) the total amount allocated by Government for construction of these National Highways and the total amount spent for this purpose;

(c) the total number of proposals pending with Government at present regarding construction of National Highways in Uttar Pradesh;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(d) whether any target has been set for completion of work of these National Highways; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIAPPA): (a) No proposals for declaration of Highways into National Highways (NHs) were received from the State of Uttar Pradesh in the years 2005-06 and 2006-07.

(b) Allocation for development of NHs are made State-wise and not NH-wise. During the year 2007-08, an amount of Rs. 120 crore has been allocated for development of NHs entrusted with the State Government of Uttar Pradesh. Out of this, an amount of Rs. 45.31 crore has been spent up to October, 2007.

(c) No proposals are pending with the Government.

(d) and (e) Does not arise.

Completion of Sethusamudram Project

1139. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he is aware of his statement to the effect that the Sethusamudram Canal Project would be completed in one year in all respects and inaugurated by Prime Minister and others;

(b) if so, whether it is possible to do so, particularly when the issue is *sub-judice* before the Supreme Court and lot of controversy is going on over the entire country; and

(c) the objective approach on this issue?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Pursuant to the submissions made before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India by the Government Counsel on 14.9.2007 in respect of certain Transfer Cases and writ petitions relating to the Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project, the Government has constituated a Committee consisting of eminent persons with the terms of reference to invite objections and suggestions from all concerned including the writ petitioners having interest in the subject matter and to consider all suggestions/proposals/documents after giving them a personal hearing. The report of the Committee is awaited.

Rest areas on NH-5

1140. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that NHAI has decided to withdraw all plants for rest areas on NH-5 in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that Road Safety Forum had demanded completion of the rest area on NH-5 at Gundugolanu;